The Relationship of the School Library to the Young Adult Librarian in the Public Library

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IN A WORLD OF SUDDEN AND VIOLENT CHANGE where nothing seems to be as it once was, library service in schools and public libraries has remained fairly constant. This is not a state of affairs about which librarians should boast, but rather a condition which should give rise to some serious soul-searching.

Do our policies reflect the dramatic social changes taking place? How effective are the book selection sessions on which we pride ourselves? How much do we involve the communities in which we serve? How do the librarians appointed to work with young people relate to their patrons? How well do our materials serve the needs of students? How much real cooperation exists between the school library and the public library? Ah, this last question is one which hits a sensitive nerve! It has been discussed and debated for years wherever and whenever librarians have gathered, culminating in the Conference-within-a-Conference in 1963. A series of articles on the joint responsibility of school and public libraries in service to students appeared in the *ALA Bulletin* from June, 1965, through January, 1966. It would seem that everything that could be said on cooperation between the two institutions has already been said.

I venture to offer the suggestion, however that there is something new on the horizon: new programs, new materials, new philosophies and new funds, all of which materially affect the relationship between young adult librarians and school librarians. The social revolution which is everywhere evident is reflected in an educational revolution which emphasizes equal opportunity, independent study, continued education throughout life, and improved access to all kinds and va-

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rieties of resources. Robert Havighurst asserts that the educational revolution calls for an accompanying library revolution.[1] He points out the urgent need for libraries to cooperate so that materials may be made easily accessible to students on all levels, in all localities. Where there are large concentrations of population in urban areas, he urges that libraries be geared to serve the suburbs as well, so that their superior resources may be utilized to the fullest.

Havighurst calls attention to the fact that one in five adults is now taking part in some organized educational activity. He charges the schools with the responsibility of educating children for this life-long learning process, teaching them to learn to learn—to use libraries, laboratories, and the resources of the community as sources of information. The educational philosophy which he espouses stresses the desire to learn for the enjoyment of learning, rather than for the sake of college entrance; it considers the human mind to be an instrument for learning, rather than a storehouse of knowledge. Havighurst sees library services enhanced by the new technologies of photocopying, electronic data processing (as an aid to bibliographic searching), and direct access to indexed information in the very near future. He concludes that dramatic changes in social settings and social functions, as well as educational changes, demand dramatic changes in the patterns of library service.

Several practical aspects of the educational revolution are particularly relevant to young adult services and school libraries, i.e., compulsory school attendance, efforts to keep potential dropouts in school, and a new emphasis on independent study. Each of these factors has provided an ever-increasing flow of young adult patrons to school and public libraries and the end is not yet in sight; the problem is spiraling steadily. What to do to meet the overwhelming demands on time, personnel and materials? Whose the responsibility? What part of the job may be done by the school librarian? Where does the young adult specialist fit in? What services and materials may be shared? Who approaches whom, and when?

In 1961 the Council of Chief State School Officers adopted a set of guiding principles to foster an understanding of the role of each type of library and of the interrelationship between school and public libraries.[2] The principles apply in all types of communities, and they may serve to clarify opportunities for sharing responsibilities for service to youth:

(a) The school library serves the school, and the public library serves the community. Teachers and pupils are members of both the school and the community.
(b) Public library service—including service from state, regional, county, and community libraries—may supplement but never supplant the school library. Service which replaces the school library impedes the development of school libraries to the detriment of service to teachers and pupils and tends to separate library materials from instructional programs.
(c) The school has the primary responsibility for instruction and guidance of children and youth in the community in the use of libraries. The program of library instruction directed by the school librarians has the broad purposes of teaching library skills adaptable to all types of libraries and for encouraging pupils to use libraries for continuing self-education. School librarians, teachers, and public librarians should cooperate in planning instructional programs in the use of libraries for educational and recreational purposes.
(d) Cooperative planning in the selection and utilization of materials for children and young people is the responsibility of school administrators, teachers, school librarians, public librarians, and other community leaders concerned with youth.

Unfortunately, the development of school libraries in the past has been inadequate to serve the needs of the greatly increased numbers of students of high school age. Most high school libraries have not measured up to the Standards for School Library Programs prepared by the American Association of School Librarians in cooperation with nineteen educational and lay organizations in 1960.[3] Collections have been inadequate in scope and in depth of material; there has been a scarcity of trained librarians; administrators have failed to hire enough staff, and school libraries have not been adequately financed to stay open after the regular school day. If high school libraries had been able to meet the standards established by the national organization, many of the problems connected with library service for high school students would have been solved.

The old bugaboo of teacher assignments without proper notification has become increasingly difficult for both school and young adult librarians because of the radical curriculum changes, the increased volume of students, and the lack of funds to provide sufficient new materials to match new curricula. While there is no magic formula for this problem in the changes which are now taking place, it is

encouraging to learn that many school librarians are now actively involved in curriculum planning committees, are consulted when curriculum changes take place, are apprised of new adoptions in textbooks, and are frequently asked to prepare bibliographies for newly-designed courses.

Perhaps the greatest impetus for the development of more effective library service to high school students has been the breakthrough due to Federally-supported programs. Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has provided funds for all types of library materials, non-print as well as print. Since 1965 when the law was enacted, school libraries have burgeoned throughout the country and collections in existing libraries have been extended and enriched. The monies provided have enabled librarians to select materials to support newly-designed curricula, to provide additional copies of material much in demand, to purchase back numbers of periodicals on microfilm, and to establish audio-visual collections including tapes, records, filmstrips, slides and overhead transparencies. The provision of these curriculum-related materials in non-public as well as public high schools has enabled school libraries to assume a greater share of responsibility for serving the needs of high school students.

Many school libraries are now approaching the stage where they can serve as the primary source for reference materials for their students. Where Federally-supported programs make it possible for school libraries to do a better job of providing for the needs of high school students, the public library continues to serve as a secondary resource center for materials in greater variety and depth. The resources of the two institutions thus support and reinforce each other.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has provided an opportunity for school libraries in disadvantaged areas to extend the hours of library service after school, on Saturdays in some areas, and during the summer months. After-school service has been particularly helpful where block scheduling of classes has made it difficult for pupils to get to the school library during the day and where there is no provision in the home for a quiet place for pupils to study.

School libraries have also benefited by the training programs offered for librarians under the National Defense Education Act, Title XI, and Title II of the Higher Education Act. Intensive training of experienced teachers has provided much needed assistance in the recruitment of school librarians.

The key person, certainly, in the link between the school and the public library is the high school librarian. It is he who should inform the young adult librarian of curriculum changes, of materials needed in quantity, of special innovations which require new approaches, and of changes in philosophy which affect the instructional program. Since it is obviously not possible, or even advisable, for the public library staff to be in touch with every secondary teacher, it behooves the school librarian to assume the responsibility of communicating with the staff of the neighborhood library. The alert school librarian will welcome the opportunity to act as a liaison between the institutions, even though this responsibility is a many-faceted one which is difficult at best, and sometimes nearly impossible.

It is not enough, however, that librarians share the responsibility for providing an abundance of carefully selected materials for young people, that they have pleasant quarters in which to read and study, and that special librarians are appointed to work with them. The drastic changes which have taken place in the world call for drastic changes in library service, particularly to young people who find the world changing around them, and who are desperately in need of assistance to find answers to their many perplexing questions.

Perhaps the change should start with personnel. School libraries have been short-staffed so long that many school librarians have lost their eagerness to innovate. Bogged down by the myriad clerical details of the school system, coupled with the infinitely time-consuming clerical routines of the library, they simply have not had the spark necessary to attack the "new."

Countless high school libraries have beautiful rooms, attractive furniture, adequate book collections, and insufficient staff to provide effective library services. A concerted attack to secure clerical help has been effective in some areas, particularly through the various Federal programs which have financed grants for community workers. Where this help has been made available, librarians have been released to be professionals, and this makes all the difference. They can plan with teachers what material to use and how to use it; they can initiate class projects based on newly-acquired audio-visual materials; they can visit classrooms with appropriate materials; they can prepare bibliographies; they can support the philosophy of independent study, guiding the student to be a seeker and a learner; they can help teachers to produce new materials; they can communicate with the faculty, the administration, the pupils, and the public library.

Communication, indeed, is the key to improved services. Teachers need to communicate with students and librarians; librarians need to communicate with teachers, students and with other librarians. A recent informal survey among the school library supervisors of fourteen large cities elicited an overwhelmingly positive response to the question of cooperation with the young adult librarians of the public library. In every case the school library supervisor expressed regret that there was not better communication between the two institutions. Each respondent mentioned the difficulty of establishing joint programs and shared services due to varied hours and schedules, and limitations of time and staff.

It is encouraging to note in the responses the reflection of a climate of understanding and good will. In Austin, Texas, the schools and the public library have worked out a mutually beneficial policy concerning the use of resources; in Philadelphia the young adult and high school librarians meet for book reviewing sessions by geographic areas; the three public library systems of New York City have sponsored imaginative programs involving the school libraries in their communities; in Milwaukee the list of books selected for young adults is distributed to all high school librarians. These examples of friendly cooperation, and others of a similar nature, provide a foundation on which to build a meaningful and effective partnership; they are steps in the right direction.

Historically, the public library in the United States has been the people's university. Since the days of Sunday school libraries, one of its main functions has been to provide facilities and materials for independent study. To assume its rightful place in today's educational revolution, the public library and especially the service devoted to young adults, must be geared to serve new programs with new materials, new equipment, new facilities, and perhaps, new attitudes. No longer is it enough to supply resources in depth to college-bound students. The dominant theme in the educational revolution, equal opportunity, demands convenient and comprehensive access to information of all kinds, at all levels.

Young people need competent counseling in the selection and interpretation of tapes, films, records, magazines, and other materials which will involve them in a learning experience. Recently, innovative programs for young adults have transformed the services in many areas, notably in the disadvantaged districts of urban centers where programs have been plotted to deal specifically with the non-academic

interests of school dropouts and other young people who have not been attracted to the traditional public library.

These programs have usually been developed by young librarians who have a sympathetic understanding of today's youth, and a vision of what needs to be done to serve their needs. They recognize that too often there is a void where there should be a channel, and they are devising new techniques to provide some kind of passageway.

Two major deterrents to such hopeful programs are the shortage of materials and the scarcity of qualified staff. Where there is insufficient material to cover mass assignments, the establishment of paperback collections has proven to be a success in two ways. A colorful array of paperbacks displayed in revolving racks has a definite appeal to youth, especially reluctant readers who may never have had a successful experience with a "real" book. While some adults may scorn the poor print and inferior format, experiments show that young people will invariably choose a paperback if confronted with several editions of the same title.

Multiple paperback copies of titles on required reading lists not only help to solve the problem of shortages but provide an added bonus. The very presence of a paperback collection in an institution which has always represented the intellectual approach helps to break down an attitudinal barrier which has long existed among culturally deprived young people. An informal, nonacademic atmosphere helps to break down the defenses of youth who have been suspicious of the motives of educators and librarians, as well as teachers, and of the institution which has apparently been designed for those who need it least.

The personnel problem which pervades the profession has too often resulted in a cut in service to youth. Adolescents are especially sensitive to adult reactions to their behavior, and where there is no qualified young adult librarian on the staff, or where service to young adults has been curtailed, the climate of understanding deteriorates rapidly. Such retrenchments have a permanently damaging effect. The culturally disadvantaged youth in our society are those who are deprived of the services they desperately need. It is not enough that the schools are making a massive effort to teach pupils to read; the public library has the opportunity, and the responsibility, to make them readers.

It is axiomatic that personalized service elicits a positive response and overcomes negative attitudes. The librarian with a special interest

in young adults can make learning a private and personal affair for those he serves. Where he is allowed to serve he becomes a co-director of learning with the teacher. He has the distinct advantage of operating in an environment apart from the school, but he is most successful where he can tie his program closely to that of the schools in his community.

Perhaps the most effective relationship of this kind is that reported by Pauline Winnick and William Horn in a recent issue of *American Education.*[4] They describe the emergence of a new breed of librarian now operating successfully in the public library systems of Nioga and Westchester, New York, and in Prince George's County, Maryland. Known as liaison librarians, they zero in on the problems most often identified as stumbling blocks in library service to youth. Working directly with and through school librarians, they provide channels of communication which alleviate the misunderstandings which too often exist between the public library and the schools. Through direct and frequent contacts with the schools, they provide a climate of understanding and good will which fosters an ideal partnership.

Such new approaches give promise of a new day in the relationship between young adult librarians and those who serve in school libraries. They mark a revolutionary change in service to match the revolutionary changes in education. "It is the worst of times, it is the best of times" for those who are charged with the responsibility of guiding youth to become life-long seekers of knowledge. The best may only be realized as librarians in the public library and the schools work more closely together as co-directors of the educational enterprise.

References

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